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INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
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RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 000617

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR JIM CAIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [ECON](#) [OVIP](#) [DA](#)
SUBJECT: YOUR VISIT TO COPENHAGEN

Classified By: Ambassador James P. Cain, reasons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) Madam Secretary, you know Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moller as a good colleague, and Denmark as one of our closest allies in Europe. Your "farewell" visit here is much appreciated by the Danes, who are naturally looking ahead to the incoming administration but are also keen to highlight the strength of their partnership with you. Your exchanges with Per Stig and with Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen will reinforce Danish resolve further in our common efforts to confront global threats to peace, freedom, and prosperity. As you know, the Danes are absolutely committed to sustained, active engagement to meet these challenges.

A Steady Partner in the Wider World

¶2. (C) Denmark's commitment can be seen in its many overseas deployments, from its naval vessels on patrol off the Horn of Africa, to its peacekeeping forces in Kosovo and its battle-hardened troops engaging the Taliban in Afghanistan's southern Helmand province. Danish intelligence and security services work hand in hand with ours in combating al-Qaeda at home and abroad. A world leader in alternative energy technology, Danish firms are at the forefront of developments in wind power and biofuels, strengthening Denmark's "green" credentials as it prepares to host the UN Climate Summit (COP-15) in December 2009. Denmark contributes 0.8 percent of its GDP in development and humanitarian aid, mostly to Africa but also to Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Palestinian territories.

¶3. (C) Re-elected to a third term last year, the Rasmussen government presides over a thin majority but with a commanding position against a lackluster and frustrated opposition. Although it has begun to feel the effects of the global economic crisis, the Danish economy has experienced a healthy expansion in recent years, unemployment is recently higher but still near record lows (3.0 percent), and large budget surpluses have been on the verge of wiping out the Danish public debt altogether. Denmark is not without its problems -- among them the challenges of a multicultural society. Strained relations with its 200,000-strong Muslim immigrant population were highlighted during the 2006 cartoon crisis and again earlier this year when some of those drawings were reprinted here.

¶4. (C) Even amid the global financial turmoil, the Danes are sure to have the progress of our mission in Afghanistan, the future of European security, and the transatlantic relationship uppermost on their minds. In the Danes you will find committed Atlanticists, convinced of the primacy of NATO (while looking to eliminate Denmark's EU "opt-outs" on defense, justice and the euro as soon as possible) but concerned about the Alliance's ability to meet new and ongoing challenges.

15. (C) Nowhere is this concern more pressing than regarding the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Although the Danish deployment enjoys broad parliamentary backing and public support, the Danes remain troubled by the difficulties of securing greater -- and more flexible -- contributions from Allies and what this means for the future of NATO. The foreign minister and prime minister will welcome a discussion of efforts to encourage greater "solidarity" among members in Afghanistan, assuming that the topic has not been exhausted at the NAC ministerial earlier in the week. FM Moller visited Afghanistan in late November, highlighting with Karzai his skepticism of political engagement with Taliban leaders and predicting publicly that Danish forces will be present there for another 4-5 years.

16. (C) Meanwhile, Denmark itself is on the front lines of the battle against Islamic extremism and terror in Europe, and the Danes are working closely with us to disrupt nascent terror cells and promote better integration of immigrant communities. Danish authorities have made a number of high-profile arrests in the past two years, including one with direct links to al-Qaeda and on which we cooperated closely. Denmark has a mixed record on prosecutions and we are now providing them with assistance in this area as well. Although the cartoons/freedom of expression issue remains something of a blind spot for the Danes, there are signs of an evolution in public opinion here; a poll earlier this year showed majorities approving of the cartoon's original publication but disapproving of a more recent reprinting.

Some Retrospection, and a Look Ahead

17. (C) FM Moller and PM Rasmussen are certain to invite your reflections on a range of critical issues as you leave office. In addition to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Moller in particular will want to hear your assessment of the Middle East peace process, given his long-standing interest and his own recent travel there (including to Syria). As you know, Moller remains a strong advocate of a multi-track approach. We can expect that the Danes will seek your perspective on long-term relations with Russia, as well as approaches in that context to Georgia, Ukraine, and missile defense.

18. (C) Despite last year's withdrawal, the Danes still consider themselves part of the Coalition in Iraq and will be interested in your assessment of the situation there. Rasmussen and Moller have been among the strongest voices for maintaining a tough line on Iran, on terrorism, nuclear proliferation and human rights grounds. With incidents of high-seas piracy in the Gulf of Aden alarmingly high, the Danes -- currently leading the CTF-150 naval mission off the Horn of Africa -- have grown increasingly vocal about the need for coordinated action to protect Danish and international shipping there.

19. (C) Naturally, the foreign and prime ministers are keenly interested in our transition and would welcome any insights you could offer into the process, together with observations about the key players and anticipated agenda of the incoming administration. The Danes may highlight their hosting of the UN COP-15 meeting here next December, which they hope will approve a new global climate change treaty and solidify Danish credentials as a leader in renewable energy. Although Denmark has so far managed to weather the global economic crisis better than others, the Danes are deeply concerned about the situation and its impact on trade, and may seek your views on the latest developments.

10. (C) Moller and Rasmussen may ask your views on the likely early closure of Guantanamo and how that process would work; the Danes rejected our earlier appeals to accept former detainees, but soon may find themselves forced to revisit the issue. Finally, your letter on alleged rendition flights through Danish airspace proved invaluable to managing this contentious issue last month, and Per Stig may want to recognize this privately.

¶11. (C) In addition to expressing appreciation for all Denmark has done -- especially in Afghanistan, I recommend that you reassure the Danes that the next administration will be committed to working closely with European partners, particularly those such as Denmark dedicated to active engagement on global challenges. Long among the most pro-American allies in Europe, the Danes have sought to cultivate a close relationship with us in recent years, typified by the warm friendship between Rasmussen and President Bush. The Danes approach the new U.S. administration with a mixture of anticipation and trepidation, hopeful about new opportunities and a freshening of the relationship, but also concerned about maintaining a privileged position despite their relatively small size. Ultimately, such concerns will be addressed in time, but your visit offers an important opportunity to reaffirm in strong terms the enduring affection and strategic partnership between our two nations.

¶12. (SBU) Madam Secretary, I look forward to welcoming you here next week. As a point of information, the day before your arrival in Copenhagen I will return from a three-day visit to Afghanistan with Defense Minister Gade to visit Danish and American troops. Yours, Jim Cain.
CAIN